



The Military Order of the Collar of Saint Agatha of Paternò

Grand Chancellor's Bulletin

January 2022

The Grand Master, his family and the Government of the Order wish all Members of the Order, their family and their loved ones a happy New Year and wish for them that it be healthy and fruitful, in any event a vast improvement on the year just ended!

Words from a Chaplain



Each year in January people look towards the year that lies ahead filled with a sense of hope and expectation for the things to come. This year, however, that hope may be tarnished a little by the reality that we continue to be gripped by a global pandemic. For many of us things had truly begun to return to something much closer to normal and it seemed like there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Then yet another surge brought reality into sharp focus and we realized that even after almost two years this pandemic was not going away any time soon. This, I think, can sap us of the hopefulness and the positive outlook with which we usually begin a new year.

Uncertainty is the perfect breeding ground for both fear and despair. But, it doesn't necessarily have to be. I think, rather, that the decision is more in our own hands than we might imagine at first. We can look to the example of three people about whom we have just spent several weeks thinking of, talking about and focusing on. Namely, the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Continued overleaf

stephenwm@outlook.com
www.mocinfo.info



The feasts of the Church year are not arranged in a way that celebrates historical events in chronological order. Rather, the feasts fall in their progression in a way that teaches us about the reality of our faith by pointing out different events in the life of the Lord as signposts along the way. So, for example, the Christmas cycle that concluded the last year and spilled over into the start of the new one is all about proclaiming the coming of the Saviour and recounting those moments when He was shown to others, or seen by others as the long-awaited Messiah. First, His coming was proclaimed to the children of Israel in the persons of the Shepherds. Then, He was shown to be a Messiah for all the nations at His Epiphany to the Magi. Then, at His Baptism He was shown to be chosen by God the Father and seen as a beloved Son. What ties those together is the revelation that He has come but those events take place at very different times in Christ's life. The feasts have us jump from His infancy to age 30 in the space of just a few days in the Church's calendar.

As part of my own reflection I have tried to think about what might have been going on in the lives of the Holy Family in real time. As I write these words it is some 16 days since Christmas. At this point in time after Jesus was born it is possible that the Magi made their visit and Joseph received his revelation in a dream to flee to Egypt with the Child and His mother because of the treachery of Herod. Think about Jesus, Mary and Joseph going into a strange place because they lived under a threat that could potentially destroy them. Of course the Egypt into which they fled was not the "land of the pharaohs" and pyramids. By that time Rome ruled Egypt directly and the Emperor was represented by a Governor. There was some law and order there and they were able to move about freely because, like their own country, it was governed by the same authority. But, it still wasn't home. They were strangers in a strange land. Their fate was uncertain and they had no idea how long it would be before this situation would change. The birth of a child is normally the cause of tremendous joy as well as a sense of hope in the future wondering what the child will someday grow to be. For the Holy Family that sense of joy was tarnished a bit by the need to flee into the night. Their hopefulness may have been mitigated by the uncertainty of their fate. Their sense of fear may have, at times, gotten the better of them.

Nevertheless, they placed their faith and trust in the Lord. He protected them and they were able to reach an end of their exile, a return to their home and the resumption of a very normal and quiet life. Even in the uncertainty of these times their story fills me with a sense of hope in the future despite the clouds of doubt looming on the horizon. The example of the Holy Family serves as an example for us all that, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, the new year does indeed bring a cause for hope in the future. Each year people like to make New Year Resolutions. Perhaps this year, while we are still experiencing the Covid pandemic, our mutual resolution can be to have the year ahead be one in which we place our full trust in the Lord to guide us and protect us. Let this year be one of a renewed faith in God that gives us the strength and the courage to face whatever may come.

Fr Guy Selvester



News from Catania

As previously advised, because Sicily is deemed to be still in a state of emergency with regard to the Covid pandemic there will be no public festivities in Catania for the Feast of Saint Agatha. Respecting the Church's wishes. There will be no Investiture in Catania this year –

However, Catania has a new archbishop. Our good friend mons Gristina duly submitted his resignation on his 75th Birthday as he was obliged to do. To replace him the Holy Father has nominated mons Luigi Renna, currently a bishop in Apulia and one of the youngest bishops in Italy. We wish mons Renna all Heaven's Blessings in his new charge. We also wish every Blessing for mons Gristina in his retirement. We understand he will be remaining in the vicinity so we dare to hope he will soon grace one of our events.



Mons Luigi Renna



His Coat of Arms

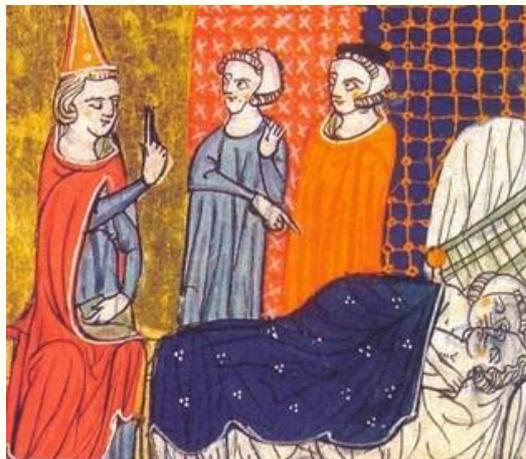
The Crown of Thorns is of course Our Lord's but also refers to the arms of Andria where he was born. The pomegranate is an unusual reference to the unity of the Church. The three silver stars represent Our Lady. The motto means: Build in Love.

The Royal Order of St James I of Aragon

The Royal Order of James I of Aragon is the third in order of seniority (after San Salvador and the Balearic Crown, see previous Bulletins) of the honorific Orders of Chivalry in the gift of the Crown of Aragon. Traditionally it rewards faithful supporters of the Royal House and other such deserving persons for the contributions they have made to the preservation of spiritual values or in other fields of human activity.



James I the Conqueror



His conception



The Order takes its name from James I The Conqueror, the most noteworthy of the Kings of Aragon for a wide variety of reasons. James inherited the Kingdom of Aragon and County of Barcelona from his father Peter II and the Lordship of Montpellier and surrounding territories from his mother Marie of Montpellier. He was conceived when his father was tricked by courtiers into sleeping with his own wife, rather than any other woman. His mother then lit twelve candles and named them after the Apostles vowing that her son would take the name of the candle that lasted longest, which turned out to be Saint James appropriately known as the Apostle of Spain. In 1213 he ascended the throne at the tender age of 5 and he ruled until the age of 68, the longest rule of any Iberian monarch to date. During his reign he effected by conquest the dramatic extension of the Lands of the Crown of Aragon by Languedoc to the North, Valencia to the South and the Balearic Archipelago. Under James Aragon dominated the entire western Mediterranean. As a legislator he was a supreme issuer and codifier of laws, especially covering maritime trade. He wrote his autobiography the *Llibre dels Fets* (the Book of my Deeds) which is still very well worth the read. He was a significant builder, notably the cathedral of Lleida (Lérida), a great patron of learning being principally the promoter of the university of Montpellier and also Valencia. He was passionately interested in religion, promoting public debates between Catholic theologians and rabbis (with the undisguised intention of converting the Jews). By his three legitimate wives (ignoring several mistresses who produced offspring) he had numerous offspring. When the descendants of his first two wives died out, by his Will of 21st August 1261 still in the Archive of the Crown of Aragon in Barcelona, the heirs to the throne are the children and further descendants of his third wife Teresa Gil de Vidaure. However, by this time the force of arms had intervened in the person of the heir to Castle & Leon and the Lands of the Crown of Aragon had been subsumed into what became modern Spain. Those descendants are to be found today in the House of Paternò Aragon Ayerbe headed by our Grand Master.



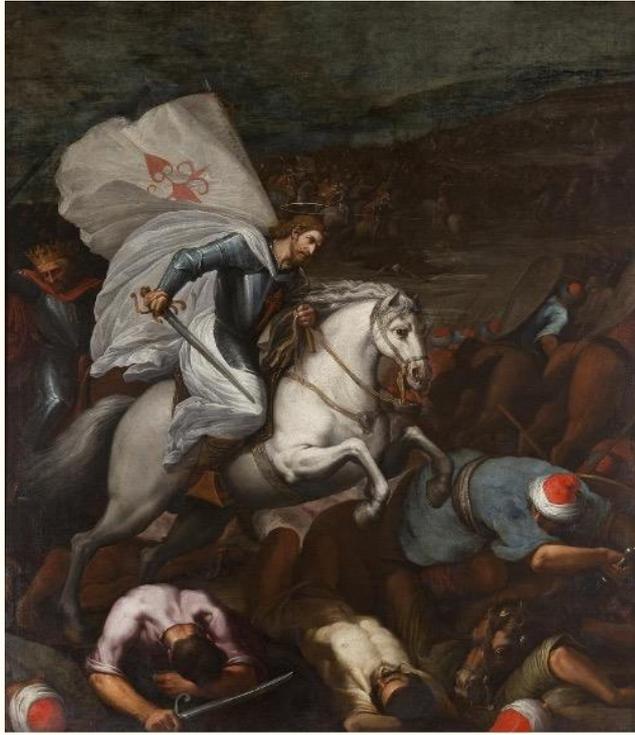
James I receiving a Moorish delegation



James issuing laws

The insignia of the Order consists of the Cross of Santiago (St James the Apostle) and is technically a cross fitchy (ending in fleur de lis) but the lower limb pointed as if to be driven into the ground or alternatively in the form of a sword commemorating various miraculous interventions of St James in battle to assist the Christians to drive out the Moors. The Cross is red to commemorate Our Lord's Passion but also the blood shed by St James at his martyrdom.





St James assisting the Christian Reconquest

Stephen Monte Sant'Angelo

